

Date: May 21, 1999

DSL-BQA-99-007

To: Nursing Homes
Community Based Residential Facilities
Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled

NH 3
CBRF 3
FDD 3

From: Rita Prigioni, Interim Director
Bureau of Quality Assurance

Emergency Generator Signaling Requirements

NURSING HOMES AND FACILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Bureau of Quality Assurance Life Safety Code surveyors have observed that facilities with emergency generators do not have a means of alerting staff of problems with the emergency generator. Although we have noted this problem, we are not currently citing this as a deficiency in older facilities.

In reviewing the National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code (LSC) requirements, we have determined that the requirement for remote notification of trouble has been in place since the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) adopted the 1967 edition of the LSC as a certification requirement on October 28, 1971.

The LSC references the National Electric code for annunciation function. Compliance with the National Electrical Code (NEC) has also been a continuing requirement of the State of Wisconsin Building Code.

In reviewing the 1965/1968 edition of the NEC, we find the requirement for annunciation (derangement) in Article 700-12 (NEC):

700-12. Derangement Signals. Audible and visual signal devices shall be provided where practical for the following purposes:

- (a) To give warning of derangement of the emergency or auxiliary source.
- (b) To indicate that the battery or generator set is carrying load.
- (c) To indicate when the battery charger is functioning properly.

We have determined that compliance with this requirement may be accomplished for minimal cost. We have also received a formal interpretation from NFPA which indicates a single warning light and audible sound at a 24-hour nursing station or 24-hour supervised work station would be acceptable in meeting this requirement in existing buildings.

Nursing home facilities constructed after June 1, 1976, which must meet the 1973 or 1981 or 1985 or 1991 edition of the NFPA 101 Code are required to have a generator warning system. The warning

system shall be in accordance with NFPA 76, NFPA 99, NFPA 110, and the National Electrical Code (NFPA 70) referenced by the edition of the code under which the building was built.

ANNUNCIATOR REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW/REPLACEMENT GENERATORS

Please note that any new or replacement generator has to meet the requirements of the 1991 edition of the LSC. This requires compliance with the edition of NFPA 99, NFPA 70 and NFPA 110 referenced in the LSC, which will indicate the standards for complete warning systems for generator sets. The warning panels are to be located at 24-hour staffed locations. The signals can be extended to include the nursing station. It should also be noted that the plans for the new installation would have to be submitted to the Bureau for approval prior to the beginning of construction.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR CBRFS

Community based residential facilities (CBRFs), which are not on municipal water systems, may require a generator to provide back-up power to a fire pump connected to the water storage system for the sprinkler system. When back-up power is required, signals to indicate malfunction for these generators are required.

GENERATOR TESTING FOR YEAR 2000 READINESS

As a part of Year 2000 readiness, all providers are expected to test and ensure that all of their equipment, including the generator, annunciator and related devices, will continue to be operational into the next millennium.

If you have any questions regarding new installation, please contact your BQA engineer.

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